

Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council  
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>> Jennifer: We're talking employment here. I already introduced myself but I'm Jennifer and I'm an administrator at IN\*SOURCE. I oversee lots of programs from 0 to 26. One of my, I don't know, passion projects, is entering transition to adulthood and so I oversee other employment services as well directly to students with disabilities. And so that's one of the things that I really want to be here today.

So you're not unfamiliar with employment of people with disabilities and how nationally, within the state and city people with disabilities are under employed or unemployed, get paid lower wages than people without disabilities. And among employed individuals with disabilities the individuals considered working in competitive employment is even much lower than that. I just wanted to give like some information about employment, and I'm not here to solve any problems or I'm not affiliated with any, you know, political parties or anything like that. I'm really just here to listen, whether it's a rant, whether it's an idea for improvement, whether it's just a comment, I'm just here to facilitate discussion.

So anything you want to start off by sharing, I'd like for you to use the mic though.

Would you like to join employment? Okay.

>> All right. So yeah, you can also choose to speak your comments. You can write them down. There's also a QR code. If you completely were like oh, man, I totally forgot to say that, you can still ask us even after you leave here.

>> There's so many different things I could talk about and ramble on for hours upon hours about the changes that are coming up and proposed limitations that are happening. Part of my role for ADEC as the employment first manager so I oversee the idea when people come into services, at the first they have the right to explore, whether it's employment, whether it's sitting home playing video games, at least they are getting out to explore the community and seeing what can benefit them in their future.

One of my biggest concern right now is the limitation for PRIAS services. PRIAS services is being capped at 10 hours per semester which completely breaks down the whole purpose of why that initiative was put forth in the first place.

One of my biggest concerns with that is the kids that are going

through an adult program are going to be able to go out there and just explore different jobs.

[Inaudible announcement.]

>> Sorry, I didn't want to talk while he was talking. PRIAS in general is the first basis of starting employment services and that's the very first part. If they're capping medicate or eliminating Medicaid to hour restrictions on Medicaid services y are we cutting that beginning -- I can't even talk right now -- that beginning, you know, service in general just to get the ball rolling for them working in the community.

Another thing is, you know, prevocation services. Yes, I 100 percent agree that shelter workshops should be shut down and working for subminimal wage but it correlates to getting your foot in the door for starting services. We just shut down our factory for ADEC industries and now we completely have closed doors and our last day is September 26.

So what does that look like when they've been there for 22 years and that's the only thing they've known to do? So eliminating those services to go out and do exploratory services with VR services in general. Nerve's also cutting down to having a cap of 90 day period that they can do this so meaning employment service providers can only spend 90 days with the individual to figure out what they need to do with their life and that's not enough time to literally work with that individual to figure out how they best learn, how they best interact, how they -- social issues they might be having or boundary services or behavior issues for them to maintain in general.

I could keep going own and on with individual services. Another one with VR services in general is they're really spearheading the process for how long it takes for somebody to get services and deterring a lot of our clients away from staying in services that if they're not really getting any or (). If we're not able to pinpoint the exact ideal job that an individual will be successful in, then they're looking at other means and cutting them from VR services entirely.

>> Within 90 days?

>> Within 90 days. So it's sad. Its really sad.

>> Comparatively, if you think of someone who graduates high school and go into college, they change their measure like 7 times before they figure out what they want to do and they have two, four, six, how many hours to do to figure that out. 90 days is a really short period of time. Think about what's normal and natural to try to figure out what it is that you want to do.

>> Another barrier for employment is capping services in general for, you know, behavioral sciences, I mean, entirely, so cutting that at six hours a month. Yes, that will give more funding opportunities for other programing based on the issue which I totally understand what's going on with that and they're trying to make it -- make that expansive program to other individuals who don't have access to that so I get that part. When we rely on so

much behavioral services when it comes to keeping an individual employed that it's really huge barrier to employment for a lot of individuals.

>> Right. Because it requires a lot of support to make sure that the employers understand and that the employees can work through some of that at work. We all have to work through our own behavioral things at work.

>> Come join us. We're talking about employment.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Absolutely. Absolutely.

>> Yes. We're talking about employment. I have a little microphone.

>> That we're kind of passing back and forth.

>> We also have CART services. There's a QR here if you need that.

>> Okay.

>> Okay.

>> Yeah. So VR services in general are being cut dramatically. Their founding source is not what it used to be. They're also getting rid of transportation from the services and allowing people to get assistance with getting driver's training. Which is a huge barrier as I talked about earlier with transportation issues with the local area here with our government council and there's issues all around when it comes to this.

>> There's a cycle that you have to maintain to have employment, you have to be able to get there.

>> Yeah. And if we can't meet those needs in the front though, then why are we having the 20 hours of volunteerism employment put in place for individuals who are trying to stay on Medicaid or Medicare or food stamps in general, that's the next thing they're looking at for cutting that in general too. It's a huge impact for a lot of individuals.

>> It is. You have to be healthy in order to look for a job. All of these things impact employment.

>> Uh-huh. I mean, I can continuously go on. Do you want to share anything for employment that you want to -- I'll give you the microphone here.

>> Sure sure. I'm Jeremy by the way, pleasure to meet you. I'm Jennifer.

>> Hi, Jennifer. Nice to meet you. So coming into this a little bit late. Sorry, I was out of the room. So my experience with employment has been as a person with an acquired disability which I acquired my disability in a car accident 20 years ago and at the time I was lucky that I had an employer who stood by me throughout the recovery process, and even then, when it came to me having acquired a disability and getting back to work, I had no understanding of what the resources or infrastructure was to help with that. When I acquired my disability, there was no information from the social worker in the trauma center on this is what you need to do to try to go back to work or anything like that. There was a brief, very brief conversation with an occupational

therapist about me getting behind the wheel of a car again which is how I acquired my disabilities was during the time home from work.

>> And the trauma at well.

>> My response at that point was one that sent them running from the room and it was never brought up again. So six months into my recovery when I needed to have a way to get to work, that was when I connected with voc rehab. I'm giving you two different experiences. This was my experience 20 years ago and I went to voc rehab and nobody made me aware of what I could ask for so I asked for the bare minimum. And my voc rehab counselor that I was assigned to, did my intake, was fired that day and my file stayed on her desk untouched for about two months until somebody finally responded to my efforts to follow up to tell me why nobody was contacting me to move forward. That was the first experience.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> So what came out of that was a car with permanent hand controls, nothing to help me with prosthetics, nothing to help me figure out how to modify the job, it was just this is what Jeremy needs to go back to work with no exploration of -- because I didn't know what I needed.

>> The practical things.

>> And my employer didn't know what I needed. So we didn't handle that effectively. That was 20 years ago. I no longer work in that industry because I was in hotels and I couldn't listen to people complain about their mattresses being too soft after losing both of my legs. But note there that the employer did not know and did not guide me either to rely on the state resources to help us make that transition.

Whether we're talking about voc rehab or talking about independent living centers that could have helped me with that transition. Leap forward to the last couple years here whereby I approached the state voc rehab agency because I wanted to create my own business around advising hotels, restaurants, movie theaters, convention centers on how to go beyond a 35 year starting line of ADA and actually include everybody and get us in the door.

That process has also been an interesting experience where I have had three voc rehab counselors in the last two years. The first year my file barely moved forward, largely because of the change in voc rehab counselors. And I wasn't the only one. At the end of that first year the only service I had gotten was a photographer to take pictures of me for a website and that photographer was also another voc rehab client who then received a call from his counselor telling him he wasn't going to get paid for the services he'd given me because my voc rehab counselor hadn't moved it forward. So I had to jump in and fight with that.

Going to self-employment route, they assigned a consultant to work with me. And there was a lot of this is who you want to work with for marketing, a lot of guidance to specific vendors who then did not do what I asked them to do and then there were meetings where I felt like an employee and not the business owner. And I was treated

like an employee by the voc rehab counselor, the consultant, the vendor who was providing services to me as a business owner.

There is -- I have heard from multiple other folks who have gone that self-employment route including that photographer who was pushed towards that same marketing company of the huge waste of resources that went into paying somebody who didn't provide the services that we asked for, they provided the services they decided we needed.

That is what I see regularly happening, whether we're talking about voc rehab or other services is this we know what you need instead of we're listening to you telling us what you need and helping you find resources to achieve what your goals were. That is very much what I struggled with.

At the end of the day when it comes to the Independent Living Council and their interaction with those places that are there to support employment, nobody knows about these resources until you're a person with a disability trying to find them.

>> And you really have to dig.

>> That's it. You really have to dig. As I talk to people with disabilities across this state, most don't know what a center for independent living is, people that lived with disabilities their entire life not acquired them like I did but grew up with them have never heard of voc rehab and never heard of an independent living center and that's where I would love to see the state Independent Living Council put its budget into educating the public about first the fact they can become a member of the disability community at any given moment and second --

>> We're all a day away, right?

>> Exactly, or a breath honestly or an eye blink. I know those folks who are walking down the steps and who were just fine one minute and dropped something and that was the beginning of a disability.

So helping the general public which would then lead to employers understanding their role in helping people with disabilities secure employment and the benefits that come, you talk to an employer, they're afraid of the liability or of the cost of accommodations instead of looking at the lower turn over costs that they get by making those accommodations.

>> Yep.

>> Or looking at the innovation that is sparked in the way that they get their job done by employing people with disabilities that force them to find new ways to achieve the same goals more often than not are more productive.

>> And efficient.

>> Yes. So this is where --

>> Universal design like in schools.

>> It is. Although when you talk about universal design you have to really talk about what that is because more often than not they approach universal design even that from the perspective of the consumer and not the person working behind the front desk or

teachings the class or the person -- it's how do we get the people in the door to spend their money but not how do we make certain we're able to hire the people with the disabilities to serve the people coming in the door who are just like them even if you can't see it.

>> Yep.

>> So sorry, that's my soap box.

>> No, I heard another thing that you said. So you were talking about educating the community, educating employers, getting information out there because anybody could need these services at any point. I also heard maybe education of healthcare professionals.

>> Oh, yes, very much so.

>> I'm not sure that 20 years ago is much different than today in terms of the knowledge of hospital and healthcare professionals and what practically people might need when they've acquired a disability.

>> Right. Yeah. When you're leaving the hospital, you're given the bandages, given the prescriptions and given a check in date when you need to get your next appointment. You are not given any introduction to welcome to the world of disability. And yeah, that is -- it is a systemic issue that until the state organizations are able to put their budget towards it, it's very piecemeal in regards to the way it's been approached. So like I'm out there, last year Eskinazi health had me come in for three different staff trainings to talk about these things and to talk about the experience of a person with a disability, but that's one hospital.

>> Right. Right. Out of how many, yeah.

>> Yes. And so at a systemic level, what can these organizations do to change the script on who a person with a disability is and how may I help you? They enter the community when they become a part of it. I think employment is a huge piece of that. Do you want to add?

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Fair enough.

>> [Inaudible.] Sorry. I was saying I could literally do a five hour presentation on what the impact is for a lot of these changes for policy changes going forward. One of the things that I know that as a provider that we need to do a lot more on is outreach in general and that's really something that we focused on as of two years ago when we started my position is doing a lot of the outreach and talking to employers and breaking down the barriers to disabilities.

One of the things that we're doing this year is offering some free training events for a lot of individuals who are in pretransitional services and young adult programs to start engaging at a lot earlier stage.

There is like you say when it comes to the hospital setting there's not a lot of advocacy out there and there's a huge missing gap when it comes to meeting people where they are that need these services.

>> It's a lack of whole person [Inaudible] narrow focus, there's a lack of [Inaudible] --

>> As I was saying earlier, before you walked up to the table, we missed a lot of what was considered person centered employment when it came to working with VR services and the changes that are happening now when we're limiting the discovery period when someone comes first into VR services in 90 days and if they don't figure out what they want to do by then they're moving into job placement with something they don't want to do with their life and they're not happy with that choice and that's why it's so important to talk about funding for these programs and how marketing these services can be to individuals. I mean, I feel for you, I really do. I have Asperger's, so it's a form of autism, so public speaking for me is very awful. Confronting people is weird and I don't look people in the eyes because I can't do that. Right now I'm looking at your forehead because that's what I learned how to do, how to mask some of these autism behaviors I have.

And, you know, hearing this back in the day when I was going through school and having an understanding that I won't ever be successful in a job because I won't be able to advocate for myself was the biggest thing that I feel like was a barrier for me when moving forward to employment.

>> You feel like that's what you were taught in the schools?

>> Uh-huh.

>> Yeah, again, flipping the script on what we deal with. Instead of teaching you that, we're teaching you how to mask the fact that you didn't want to look in someone's eyes, why not teach us, the interviewer, the fact that that doesn't necessarily mean anything. When we talk about those things, I majored in hospitality and tourism management which includes human resources, I was never -- we talked about the Americans With Disabilities Act for an hour in a hospitality law class and all we focused on was what the ADA required from a physical standpoint. There was no discussion of the fact that there's this Title I that covers employment and what you can and can't ask and how you make certain that process is nondiscriminatory. None of that was covered in my education.

And that like to me that's again systemic. We have to go to the early childhood education. We have to go every step of the way and look at how are people with disabilities being represented if at all. And if they're not at all, then that's our first issue but then the next issue is acknowledging that the concept of normal or regular or average, actually those concepts of normal and regular those are just average.

>> To you and me.

>> Right.

>> [Inaudible.] We look at normal as a really narrow is thing when the truth is it's not narrow. So that excludes a lot of people when you look at it like that.

>> Absolutely. Getting back into more of the employment side in

general, run of the biggest impacts right now with VR services is they're being cut funded dramatically and what that looks like placing somebody into a job, it's breaking relationships to employers that we spent so hard to build when we're not placing an individual in their proper field they feel most comfortable at. We're placing people into places they don't enjoy and turn around two weeks later and quit. What does that look like in general just reaching out to employers and just talking about DI policies. Because they may have had like an awful experience with a past, you know, employment provider. Not naming names or anything, but, you know, that's kind of the feedback I get is that, you know, they look at people with disabilities as not employable or it's a baby-sitting job or they look at it as a -- they're trying to get something benefit-wise out of it. Yes, there are plenty of benefits out there, but those are being cut dramatically, like a \$2,000 statement -- or the reinstatement to get through tax credit in 2027 so businesses will no longer get that tax credit for hiring somebody who's disabled.

On average it takes about 3 to \$5,000 to onboard somebody into an employment field and if they can't get that reimbursement right back out, what's the point?

>> Right.

>> It's just really sad.

>> Those shortened periods of time and you're placing someone in a field that maybe hasn't been fully vetted with the person, maybe they want to do like we talked earlier someone who graduates from high school and wants to go to college, they change their major seven times over four, five, six years that's a normal process. You give someone 90 days and you might not get the right fit. You're impacting outcomes for them. So it's lower even if you're serving more people.

>> One of the most impactful -- when I was first getting in to employment services I was working with somebody that I placed in a factory and when I first started discovery with him we learned he loves Legos and putting things together so trying to make that connection with an employer was kind of difficulty. We started off with light assembly work and he did well with it and there were some behavioral issues taking place and he got fired from an employer because of those issues that came through but what really benefits and impacts employment is doing what's called estimatizing. So a person may not fit into a cookie cutter role. For the individual, he would only be able to work a couple hours away before the behavior was rampant and he would get done with the job. One of the things that I did was work with that company so we first started him off with making boxes and he loved the idea of just building something, we connected the boxes with the LEGO pieces and that's what we really loved. When I talked to the employer about carving out a job like that, when I first walk into a business I look for what are some things they are needing help with or I can improve a process with. One of the things I worked



with was each individual employee on a production line was spending 20 minutes out of each hour just making boxes as they were putting things together.

>> Yeah.

>> So making shipping orders. If we had an individual that just spent two hours a day just making boxes for that production line, think about the benefit for an employer of how much production with a increase for that individual field and that in turn made that provider increase production like 20 percent faster and allowing other people, you know, who don't want to do boxes, will 100 percent give that up, allowing them to fill, you know, better needs or other areas in the employer field. So there's so many different things that employers don't really look at when they're talking about hiring someone with a disability, whether it's mental disability orifice disability. Looking at accommodation needs.

Like, for instance, you know, we had issues with an employer just to raise up a table by five inches so their wheelchair wouldn't fit underneath. How much accommodation would that need? It's two pieces of wood you can set underneath a table. We're thinking maybe \$2 of wood to really provide that accommodation. They're thinking thousands upon thousands of dollars worth of accommodation needs so it doesn't have to be that technical when we're talking about accommodation and employers don't understand that. They're looking at it as a liability standpoint where the table might not be stable it and could fall and cause damage. Your individual who is a normal everyday citizen would go in there, what if that table fell on them, same thing, right, so I don't know.

>> We were talking about outreach a little earlier and you made me think about just the lack of knowledge that employers have to innovate because you found the need that the employer because they weren't thinking outside the box, they didn't identify that if they just -- if they paid someone to just make boxes, then they could be improving their production, being more efficient, more productive. Employers don't know that. They don't -- they think I have a position, I fill it, instead of is this what we need if it's vacant and what are we missing, can we back up and look at what are the needs, right?

I don't think people think innovatively like that a lot. They need to be educated.

>> Well, yeah, and that's -- employers don't know where to go when they're considering hiring somebody with a disability. A lot of employers have never heard of voc rehab or the independent living center or their impression of a job coach is that whatever issues they're having with the employee with the disability, they tell the job coach and leave the job coach to handle that instead of having the proper training on how to properly coach an individual with a disability and, you know, relying on the job coach to help educate the supervisor in the way that they do that and realizing that it is a two way street and not a I don't have to worry about this person that we hired through comprehensive services, you know,

because I can just tell their job coach what they need to do and then I'm going to go ignore them. That's not the way it works. That's not the way it's intended to be. But I've seen that situation in a lot of hotels honestly. And just this assumption that if somebody is going to us with a disability, then we can only utilize them as a housekeeper or maybe a prep cook or a dishwasher instead of really exploring what the individual's qualifications are, what their education is, and educating the employers to explore those things.

>> So that -- I guess I find myself asking the question when we talk about the statewide plan for independent living, how do we not just put words into the plan but actually -- it's really easy to come up with a big goal but include the small action steps like connecting with employers in every county and establishing a way to engage them with the resources that are there.

>> Thank you. Go for it. I'd also like to see impact. Like what is the impact, so where do we start, what's a baseline, right, what's the goal, and what's the impact.

>> So one of the things that -- it's in the infancy stage that we're planning about starting here is -- next week we're meeting with coalition forward which is the coalition for Kentucky for employment advisory group. So it's panel discussion for providers in general and also employment -- or employers where they meet once a month to talk about disability in general, self-advocacy and invite new employers to come out. So some of the things which have led really popular with coalition Kentucky is FBI is the number one sponsor of that and how they get a lot of their new contracts -- cyber security contracts for somebody who has autism, I hate to say it, is amazing with computers and numbers and code, they're their number one hired individual.

Because they do so well with it.

That's one of the things that we're going to be starting here in Indiana is getting all the providers together in the same room. All the providers fight with each other and there is no --

>> It's competitive. It's ridiculous.

>> We need to breakdown those issues and talk about that in general. It may be like a past employment where that person got terminated for some reason and they have a grudge against that other company for some reason or that VR counselor would steer you toward the provider because maybe that provider wronged somebody in the past. So we're not looking at what's forward, we're looking at what's behind or happened previously.

I would say when I'm thinking about starting a new initiative between our agency we always think three months ahead or years ahead and not what happened in the past. That way I can always look at moving the progression forward.

>> Yeah, what are some proactive strategies, looking at proactive so this is what happened and we respond by doing this.

>> Like you were saying, how you can help train that process is that getting in a room together with all these provider agencies

and businesses and also state representatives. I also invited, you know, both of the senators that were here and advocacy providers to that panel discussion for us to start talking about these barriers. That's something we desperately really want to start. It's very infancy stage. We're just starting the process. But maybe that's something we can do soon.

>> Great. It would be nice to have a partner in that, a bunch of partners.

>> In Indianapolis, there is a monthly thing called the -- I don't necessarily like the name of it -- but the Indianapolis disability showcase. Are you familiar with that?

>> [Inaudible.] Bosma, I think.

>> So initially it was a partnership between I believe direct employers and BOSMA. BOSMA is still very much involved with it.

>> Sorry to interrupt, if you're not familiar with BOSMA, it's huge provider for individuals who are blind.

>> Right. It is technically hosted through accessibility center for independent living and the idea is absolutely to be a diverse group of people with disabilities connecting those job seekers with the employers like the FBI that are specifically wanting to hire people with disabilities for different jobs but to the best of my knowledge that's not been taken to a state level or the different counties, the different communities, and yeah, it is also like -- I feel it's very important to not be with a specific disability focused group because that does then lead to other people with disabilities saying that's just for the blind folks because BOSMA is the one leading it instead of it's really open to everybody but that's the organization that got behind facilitating it.

>> One of the wonderful things about coalition of Kentucky, they have five different regions they have these meetings at, northern, southern, west, south, different names of that. One of the things that really impacted that was having the Chamber of Commerce involved for each county. That was the huge connection that I don't think BOSMA really brought into place yet. But obviously like I said infancy stage. I'm just learning about the process.

>> Okay.

>> So we're meeting with them next week, consider how do we start something like this, what is the process going forward.

>> My involvement has very much been somebody reached out to me at one point when their initial partner dropped out, I don't remember who it was, but they reached out to me and said whereby can we approach this and I said call accessibility because for me the local center for independent living is who should be driving these things but we run in to the fact there's 23 or 28 counties that don't have a center for independent living. When we talk about the statewide Independent Living Council, I look to them instead of the individual centers because the individual centers don't serve the entire state. So I look to them to figure out how do we get that if there's something good like that happening in one area, how do we take it to the rest of the state.

>> Yeah.

>> Whether or not there's a CIL.

>> I think that's the big thing is I don't know -- I came into it late. The infrastructure was already established. I look at it and it doesn't make sense. I don't understand why there are 10 centers for independent living and a big motor in the middle of the state that has nothing covering it. To me that's something that we as a group, as a state should be able to look at and say where's the funding going, how is the funding actually getting to folks, we being isolated from it, and how do we figure out a way that makes that actually make sense instead of leaving people with disabilities without access to services.

>> And it does impact employment if those supports are not there.

>> And even if they are, getting the word to the people in those counts that are covered that there are supports there because people live their entire lives here and never hear about any of this.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> That's why I think exact awareness needs to be more rampant in general, talking to representatives about having not only disability days but celebrating disability employment month, a whole month of disability awareness. Why aren't we talking more about that instead of having these one off events throughout the year that a provider actually does.

>> July is Disability Pride Month.

>> Exactly.

>> Do you need more fliers?

>> Also another thing that really needs to get in place more is not just teaching the employment or employers I should say about what it means for DI policies but teaching family members about benefit training. That's a huge impact about that because, you know if they make too much their Medicaid is going to get cut or their benefits will be cut.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Exactly.

>> It is so complicated to navigate [Inaudible]

>> Not only is it complicated, you're told that if you're working and you're on Social Security you need to call in and report what you earned each month. It's a you have to call us and report it, not send an e-mail, you have to call. It took me four weeks to get through to a person because I would call and immediately go in to an on hold thing, I would be on hold with it on speaker phone for two hours and then all of a sudden the call would drop and there's only 20 minutes left that the office is open.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> You have to have a microphone.

>> I said you mean like one government entity talking to another one?

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Right.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> I mean, the whole -- there are incentives to working so your disability isn't reviewed, but then when you get into working, there are these obstacles that oh, I made \$1 more than I was allowed to this month and I don't have enough business expenses or disability-related expenses to knock that \$1 down and then you're looking at a cliff.

>> Yeah.

>> And sometimes that cliff is not as steep as it looks but you done the know enough about your own benefits because it's so confusing.

>> Think about how long it took the individual to get on benefits in the first place.

>> Right.

>> Then turn around to lose that the next day and have them do the whole process all over again.

>> How much is the system really set up to support you or are the obstacles there to keep you from being brave enough to take that step. I don't know the answers to that. But I know that it is a very scary, very confusing thing and my own personal experience has been going into wanting to be self-employed with the goal of getting off of benefits and getting to the point where that's starting to look like a realty and having the very people that are supposed to support me in achieving that goal they're saying we need to talk about how you make certain you don't lose your benefits. Wait a minute. What was the goal when I came to you a year ago? Why if we're right there are we -- I get it is wanting to make certain it is managed appropriately but with it constantly being changed, how do you do that?

>> I think in general too like just being a benefit liaison, so being able to talk to individuals about their benefits, it's \$900 page binder that's released every single year and I'm not sugar coating it. It's a 900 page binder of all the rules and regulations when it comes to well this person made \$5 over the limit so what's the policy in place and what that looks for in the next 90 days, 60 days, what that looks like and so many rules and regulations so that person is blind and disabled because there's so many loopholes but it's incentives they can claim to bring that process down when Social Security looks at the amount they make. There's so much confusion that goes on with benefits that's not -- it's not a cookie cutter process for each individual either.

>> Going back to what you said about the information that you don't know that you have to find. If you have a 900 page binder of just benefit information --

>> [Inaudible.]

>> That's red tape.

>> [Inaudible]

>> Exactly, yes.

>> You know, to be automobile to do -- to be to do benefit training it's great IU has these programs to get benefit trained but it's

also a barrier for other employment pride, \$350 per year to be a benefit liaison provider and just to go through this training, we have to go through two trainings before you get certified to no longer going through those trainings so it's \$700 out of our expenses to help cover me to tell you can't make over \$1,200 a month.

>> There aren't really --

>> There's not. I think in total with our last e-mail chain for individual was about 72 persons. So that's why it's so important to be certified and, you know, these agencies because, you know, ADIC in general we're lucky to have the funds in place that we can provide and send the majority of our staff now to these benefit trainings to be able to tell them this is what your impact to benefits may look like so make sure you vouch for your employer saying hey I cannot get this raise because it will impact my benefits. It's also a deterrent for a lot of people to stay working because if they get that razor bonus that may impact their benefits entirely. It's also a particular one to that when it's scaring individuals or family members to start looking at employment in the first place because of how long it took for them to get benefits from the start to potentially learning about losing it and that's scary for a lot of individuals. How long did it take you to get your benefits entirely? How long did it take you?

>> I lost my legs in a car accident. Very obvious. It took a year and a half from the point that I applied for my benefits to get them approved. They were approved on the day that I was returning to work full-time. So I called Social Security and I said hey, thanks for sending me this letter and finally approving it, but I've returned to work full-time so I'm not going to need this. The response I was given was Mr. Warner, you need to continue to receive your benefits for a year and then -- this is where things went off the rails. What they said was then it will stop. But if something happens within that first year, you give us a call and your benefits will continue or if you go off, give us a call and we'll reinstate you. Nobody explained how that all would impact my benefits. Then when low and behold my employment in the hospital industry was way too frustrating and that led to me leaving and reinstating my benefit or saying don't end them, nobody at that point or at any point said this is your trial return to work period and so then years -- now there is a window closing on your opportunity to use this benefit again and so I didn't know that and so then years later when I started looking for a full-time job teaching I then found out most of my return to work incentives were gone.

>> From my understanding with the current thing is going for training again in the fall here but it's seven years. It takes seven years for that to fall off and you to be reinstated. It's just a huge --

>> My case has been -- when I started looking at self-employment, they said benefits analysis, first thing you need to do. Everyone was like your benefits analysis should be nice and easy and then I get a call letting me know my benefits analysis was the most

confusing thing anybody in the state of Indiana ever looked at because of all the mistakes made along the way that I didn't have anything to do with other than filling out the paperwork.

>> I love case that is are cut and dry and super easy. But, you know, there's times where we get those really difficult ones where they made a mistake in the past and it impacts their benefits going forward entirely and that prevents them from getting a job because they have to be on benefits.

>> We have this system that say there are these great benefits and opportunities but these entire system of obstacles put in place that cause it to really be oppressive instead of supportive. When you asked about how long it took, a year and a half including medical records and all that kind of stuff when I was sitting in their office in a wheelchair with bandages around my legs that had just recently been amputated, why did they need a year and a half when they could have taken a picture of me, gotten my case off the table, and moved on to the person that doesn't have an obvious disability to get them the benefits they needed. Instead they're waiting in the same line behind me in a line I don't need to be in if they take a picture and move forward. The system doesn't allow for what makes sense. As you say, if you expect them to be logical, no.

>> Going back to what insult can do to change that, I do believe it's in putting their budget towards education, both of people with disabilities across the state knowing what the resources are and what the infrastructure should be and educating everybody else within the state about the fact that they could join this culture at any given moment. So they need to know these resources so that we don't have people becoming isolated from their friends, their family, their coworkers, their communities. That's what insult could do.

>> When we are tea talking about inclusion, because that's the biggest thing we're talking about, employability is the number one thing when we're looking inclusive nature because 9 times out of 10 when a kid gets out of school that's disabled, they literally sit at home because there's no information out there when it comes to what that process is and what that looks like. It really saddens me that there's nothing trained from the get go of what that process looks like or even when you get disabled or have a disability not necessarily but in an accident or something like that there's no training involved.

>> Think about if we went all the way back to high school civics classes and they talked about disability and they talked about who Ed Roberts is, who Justin Dart is, who Judy Human is if we could learn those names as American heros of civil rights of instead of us just learning a very specific curriculum decided by a group of legislators that doesn't talk about the inclusive history of our nation.

>> When you think about the number of people who in their lifetime will acquire disability, that's difficult enough to adjust to. If you have some concept of what that doesn't necessarily mean, what

it means -- what it doesn't mean is it doesn't mean the end of life, it doesn't mean I can't do this, but you don't have exposure to that in the schools or anywhere else. So take a difficult and traumatic situation and compound it significantly by not having any connection.

And the schools could and should expose kids to that just bigger part of reality.

>> This is going to have to be the last comment before we wrap up the conversation.

>> Just in general, what we can do for inclusivity in general too is having employers come together and just learn about DEI policies and what that actually means so it's not just about employing somebody at sex, race, you know, disability, or just, you know, the religion in general. It's just a whole bunch of different things impacted by that

>> When we get into the DEI situation, we always hear DEI was weaponized but there's no real explanation as to how it was weaponized and where it was weaponized, the reality is it was weaponized in to people just looking at race or gender or perhaps sexual orientation and not -- and this theory that that was being put ahead of qualifications instead of recognizing DEI programs were supposed to focus on the qualifications of the individual instead of all those other demographic pieces to make certain people were truly weighed by their education, their experience, their merit, all the things they say DEI isn't which is so angering.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Yes, there is that.

>> Last thing I would say for insult, the impact I think insult can make it in educating the state. When I say educating the state, that is the individuals, the employers, and the state agencies.

>> [Inaudible.]

>> Absolutely. Absolutely.

>> Oh, okay. When we say what insult could do where are they at the round tables so you have to have the knowledge yourself. So how for example did you find yourself being asked to do this?

>> To be here?

>> [Inaudible.]

>> So who's the facilitator?

>> How were you -- how did you get involved in this?

>> I was consulted. I work for IN\*SOURCE and I live in South Bend.

>> You work for IN\*SOURCE which is the parent network and they asked you to facilitate a roundtable about employment.

>> They asked me -- they told me about the things they identified scanned if there were any others that I thought were employment and so they asked me to facilitate this roundtable because I had suggested it.

I'm not in any way saying anything about you but what I'm saying is when Jeremy talks about having the council do, if the council is not even qualified to do this how are they going to educate the public. That was the reason for my question. If they couldn't



facilitate these meetings, how can they educate people, because maybe they don't know is the point because if you can't -- if you don't have enough knowledge to facilitate these kinds of conversations how are you somebody to look to for educating the public is all.

>> I think this is maybe their first step.

>> No, it's not.

>> It would be nice but no it's not. It's not.

>> That's fair.

>> It's factual.

>> Plus they've been around 30 years so by now you might have figured out what you were supposed to be doing.

>> [Inaudible.] And just to bring folks into start having conversations about how do we connect a disability community so that we're able to reach out to each other instead of relying on an organization to raise awareness of anything else. I don't know the answers to that but the idea was to draw 50 people together to talk about that. We may be a bit beyond that at this point.

>> Thank you all for joining this discussion. We valued all of the -- this is being transcribed as well as hearing everything.

>> Is this still active?

>> Yes, I have someone on here we transcribing.

The one last thing I would say is I've tried to be more engaged over the last year. We know the biggest issues facing people with disabilities are employment, housing, healthcare, transportation. What else would you add to that?

>> Training.

>> Training, sure. Education. And so --

>> [Inaudible.]

>> I keep hearing let's do a survey. I keep hearing let's get more data. People with disabilities, our needs have not changed in 35 years. Our needs have not changed. So it's time to go beyond the data collection and to actually put those action steps into place. Those action steps need to be smart. When I say smart, I mean simple, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timed, and if they start focusing on those small action steps, I truly believe we can get beyond this state of constantly being in the same place. And I think that is the biggest frustration all of us have is we have this infrastructure but it's not changing anything.

>> Thank you, everyone.